

Client: Utah
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White goes green

Planning a winter vacation and want to support a resort that takes sustainability efforts as seriously as you do? Head to the hills!

Just because you're on vacation doesn't mean you have to abandon your eco-conscious ways. Mountain towns are among the "greenest" destination spots on offer for travelers, says Troy Hawks, a spokeswoman for the National Ski Areas Association. "The people running most ski resorts take sustainability efforts so seriously because they appreciate the beauty they're surrounded by—and they want to make sure their kids are able to enjoy that beauty, too." So, break out your wool hats and hit the slopes (or the spa, if that's more your speed) at one of these ski areas making big eco-friendly strides.

Park City Mountain Resort * Utah

Along with a commitment to powering its chairlifts with renewable energy (enough to prevent 3.64 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions each season—the equivalent of planting 491 acres of trees!), the resort has decreased its snowmobile fleet by 30 percent and uses bio-diesel exclusively in its public buses.

Stay at: The Treasure Mountain Inn, which purchases 100 percent of its electricity as wind power and was the first hotel in Utah to go carbon neutral. (Don't miss the super-size hot tub, which is powered by solar energy!)

Vail Mountain * Colorado

In addition to recycling nearly 70 percent of on-mountain waste, Vail Mountain (part of the Vail Resorts collection, which also includes the mountains of Beaver Creek, Breckenridge and Keystone in Colorado and Heavenly Mountain Resort in California and Nevada) offers Give & Getaway packages, where guests can do volunteer work in a nearby national forest for discounted hotel rates.

Stay at: The Westin Riverfront Beaver Creek, the first hotel in Colorado to receive Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Forty percent of the building materials were sourced within 500 miles, and its spa uses eco-friendly products and organic linens.

Squaw Valley USA * California

You can feel especially great when you're cruising down the slopes on a good powder day here: Squaw Valley USA puts special emphasis on maintaining the ski terrain without expanding, leaving animal species (and their habitats) undisturbed. And don't miss the pool and ice skating rink at the top of the mountain! A heat exchanger simultaneously heats the pool while cooling the open-air ice rink.

Stay at: The Village at Squaw Valley, which uses low-flow showerheads in every room and only eco-friendly cleaning products.

Grand Targhee Resort * Wyoming

This season, Grand Targhee is banning plastic water bottles and giving each guest who stays at their resort a reusable water bottle—which can be refilled at one of the newly installed refilling stations scattered around the resort—instead. Last year, Grand Targhee challenged its employees to reduce energy expenditure by 10 percent strictly as a result of behavioral changes, such as keeping the heat low and turning off unnecessary lighting. They succeeded—and guests had fun doing their part after encouragement by front desk receptionists and restaurant servers alike.

Stay at: The Teewinot Lodge at the base of the mountain, where all of the employees are trained on energy conservation.

Okemo Mountain Resort * Vermont

In addition to relying 100 percent on wind power, the resort also makes environmental education a key part of its operations. Okemo has won awards for its kid-friendly program called Valley Quest, which uses treasure hunts to celebrate community, natural history and cultural sites.

Stay at: The Jackson Gore Inn, which recently won a statewide Green Hotel in the Green Mountain State Award for its pollution prevention initiatives and other sustainable practices. ✕

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